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ABSTRACT

An alumni survey of the Department of Adult and Community College Education (ACCE) at North Carolina State University assessed the impact of graduate study on its students. The survey used a 37-item instrument designed to capture alumni experiences and impact of the academic degree in relation to past and current professional and educational work efforts. Of surveys mailed to 286 graduates from 1997-2001, 125 were properly completed and analyzed. Findings indicated the department awarded the doctoral degree more than any other; adult education was the most popular major; most students completed their coursework in three years or less and finished their final requirements in a year or less; students who worked full-time outnumbered those who did not but took longer to complete their degree than those who did not work or who worked part-time; nearly half changed where they worked since beginning their graduate work, but most did not change the type of organization; often job responsibilities and salary changed since they started their ACCE degree; alumni were well pleased with experiences in graduate school; and written comments demonstrated the greatest challenge facing ACCE students was in balancing school, work, family, and community commitments. Suggestions called for an increased support network of part-time students and those in the dissertation phase of degree requirements, more distance education, and weekend courses. (Appendixes include the instrument and written comments.) (YLB)

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DEPARTMENT OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY

ALUMNI SURVEY
JULY, 2002

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DATA ANALYSIS
BY
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UNIVERSITY PLANNING AND ANALYSIS
AND GRADUATE OF ACCE

REPORT SUBMITTED TO FACULTY SEPTEMBER 16, 2002

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INTRODUCTION

During the spring of 2002, the Department of Adult and Community College Education (ACCE) at NC State University conducted a survey of Alumni requesting a candid assessment of the department, its academic programs, and the impact of the department on alumni careers. This effort was designed to assess how the department can better serve both students and key stakeholders and to establish benchmark standards for future comparisons.

Description of the Organization

The Department of Adult and Community College Education is a unique department in its emphasis on serving the spectrum of both formal and informal adult learning organizations, and its inclusion of administrative, instructional, and technology-related leadership within a practitioner preparation program. Based in a land-grant, Research Extensive University, the department reflects the tripartite commitment to quality instruction, research scholarship, and service outreach.

Its mission is to develop leaders, innovators, and change agents for adult learning organizations by providing effective educational programs that contribute to lifelong learning. The department predominantly serves the working professional. Thus, its dominant concern is the effective learning and application of knowledge to the student's working context, as well as the general welfare and success of its students. There is an equal expectation that faculty actively engage in research scholarship and service that facilitate future leadership, understanding, and action in both practitioner and research communities. The Department of Adult and Community College Education is committed to developing a community of learning and scholarship that is inclusive and welcoming to people from varied backgrounds, experiences, and heritages.

The department of Adult and Community College Education (ACCE) offers a broad array of Master's, Ed.D., and Certificate programs in three major areas: adult education, higher education administration, and training and development. Within each of these program areas, various specializations are available including adult and continuing professional education, community college teaching, educational gerontology, health professions education, college and university leadership, community college leadership, student affairs in higher education, program assessment and evaluation, and technology. The department also offers a distance education cohort program leading to the Ed.D. degree for students in the Asheville, North Carolina area.

METHODOLOGY

Instrumentation

This survey employed a thirty-seven item instrument designed to capture the experiences of ACCE alumni and the impact of the degree in relation to both their past and current professional and educational work efforts. Twelve of these items were measured on a four-point Likert-type scale (4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree). This survey was organized into three thematic areas: experiences in ACCE, employment experiences when entering the ACCE program, and employment experiences since completing the ACCE degree. The survey also included three open-ended questions through which respondents could offer their personal observations and suggestions for improving the curriculum and services for students. The survey was mailed to ACCE alumni who graduated from NC State in 1997 through 2001 along with a pre-paid return envelope to facilitate alumni response.

Analysis

The data were analyzed using the SAS system, version 8.01. Frequencies were generated for each variable, while means and standard deviations were calculated for twelve items that were measured on a four-point Likert-type scale. Appropriate cross-tabulations were generated to identify patterns in the responses.

Data

The ACCE department obtained addresses for 286 alumni who graduated in 1997 through 2001. Of the surveys mailed to all alumni with addresses, ninety-four were returned due to incorrect mailing addresses, resulting in 192 correctly addressed surveys. 125 instruments (65.1%) were properly completed and returned to ACCE for analysis. The proportions of graduates from each of the five years covered by this survey were similar, thus suggesting that the findings of this study are not necessarily biased due to a predominance of one cohort among the survey respondents.

RESULTS

Results from this analysis are presented in three parts. First, perceptions of respondents' experiences while engaged in academic work in ACCE is presented, followed by a comparison of respondents' work experiences upon beginning their ACCE degree with their work experiences upon completion of their degree. Thus, these results will provide feedback on the academic experience en route to the degree, as well as provide insight into the value and impact of an ACCE degree in alumni lives. Finally, an analysis of the three open-ended items will be presented.

Alumni Experiences in ACCE

Demographic Overview

Among the survey respondents, fully-admitted students outnumbered those who entered as a post-baccalaureate student (PBS) (48.8% and 39.2%, respectively). Conditionally admitted students represented 3.2% of the survey respondents. Of the respondents, more cited adult education as their major course of study (41.9%), followed closely by higher education administration (37.9%). Training and development alumni represented 20.2% of the respondents. The majority of the respondents obtained the Doctor of Education degree as their highest degree earned from ACCE at NC State University (68.8%) while a fourth of the respondents obtained the Master of Education degree (25.6%), and a small portion of the survey participants completed the Master of Science degree (4.8%). For the purpose of this analysis, responses from Master of Science alumni and those from Master of Education alumni are aggregated into a single group hereby referred to as master's students. Table 1 summarizes these results.

Table 1. *Demographics of ACCE Alumni*

Demographic	*MR*		*DR*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*
Entering Status				
PBS student	22	57.9	27	31.4
Conditionally-admitted student	1	2.6	3	3.5
Fully-admitted student	15	39.5	56	65.1
Major Course of Study				
Adult education	13	35.1	39	45.4
Higher education administration	9	24.3	37	43.0
Training and development	15	40.5	10	11.6

Primary Reason for Entering ACCE

For the respondents in this survey, the majority undertook graduate study in ACCE to advance in their chosen careers (57.7%). Almost twenty-eight percent of survey participants entered ACCE in order to make a transition to a different professional area, while approximately eight percent cited other reasons and six and one half percent entered ACCE to begin their career. Table 2 presents this information according to the highest degree earned in ACCE.

Table 2. *Primary Reason for Entering ACCE*

Reason	*MR*		*DR*	
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*
Begin career	2	5.4	6	7.1
Advance in current career field	19	51.4	51	60.0
Transition to a different professional area	14	37.8	20	23.5
Other	2	5.4	8	9.4

Time to Degree

Respondents were asked to indicate, from the point at which they first entered the program, how long it took to complete the required coursework for the highest ACCE degree earned at NC State. More than half of all alumni who earned a master's degree typically completed their coursework in 3 years or less (53.3%) while nearly a quarter completed their coursework in four years (23.7%). The longest time to complete the coursework for the master's degree among survey respondents was seven years (N=1). Respondents who completed the doctoral degree typically took three or fewer years to complete their coursework (47.7%). Approximately a quarter took 4 years (26.7%), while 7.0% took eight or more years to reach this point (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Time To Complete Coursework by Highest Degree Earned in ACCE*

Degree	3 Years or Less		4 Years		5 Years		6 Years		7 Years		8 Years or More	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
MR	21	55.3	9	23.7	4	10.5	3	7.9	1	2.6	0	0
DR	41	47.7	23	26.7	10	11.6	5	5.8	1	1.2	6	7.0

Alumni who earned a master's degree typically completed the final requirements for their degree (i.e., exams, capstone paper, or thesis) in a year or less (81.6%). 47.7% of alumni who earned the Doctor of Education degree completed their final requirements (i.e., dissertation) in a year or less, while 33.7% did so in two years (see Table 4).

Table 4. *Time To Complete Final Requirements by Highest Degree Earned in ACCE*

Degree	1 Year or Less		2 Years		3 Years		4 Years		5 Years or More	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
MR	31	81.6	5	13.2	1	2.6	1	2.6	0	0
DR	41	47.7	29	33.7	6	7.0	5	5.8	5	5.8

Only those who worked full-time took longer than 3 years to complete coursework for a master's degree or 5 years to complete coursework for a doctoral degree (see Tables 5 and 6). Tables 7 and 8 summarize the amount of time survey respondents took to complete their final degree requirements, depending on their employment situation. These results suggest that those who are employed full-time during their graduate studies tend to require more time to complete their degree requirements.

Table 5. *Time To Complete Master's Coursework by Employment During Graduate Studies*

Employment	3 Years or Less		4 Years		5 Years		6 Years		7 Years	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Full-Time	11	30.6	9	25.0	4	11.1	3	8.3	1	2.8
Part-Time (20-39 hrs)	7	19.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Part-Time (< 20 hrs)	1	2.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Employed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6. *Time To Complete Doctoral Coursework by Employment During Graduate Studies*

Employment	3 Years or Less		4 Years		5 Years		6 Years		7 Years		8 Years or More	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Full-Time	33	38.4	18	20.9	8	9.3	5	5.8	1	1.2	6	7.0
Part-Time (20-39 hrs)	2	2.3	3	3.5	2	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Part-Time (< 20 hrs)	2	2.3	1	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Employed	4	4.7	1	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 7. *Time To Complete Master's Final Requirements by Employment During Graduate Studies*

Employment	1 Year or Less		2 Years		3 Years		4 Years	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Full-Time	21	58.3	5	13.9	1	2.8	1	2.8
Part-Time (20-39 hrs)	7	19.4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Part-Time (< 20 hrs)	1	2.8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Employed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 8. *Time To Complete Doctoral Final Requirements by Employment During Graduate Studies*

Employment	1 Year or Less		2 Years		3 Years		4 Years		5 Years	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Full-Time	34	39.5	24	27.9	5	5.8	5	5.8	3	3.4
Part-Time (20-39 hrs)	4	4.7	2	2.3	0	0	0	0	1	1.2
Part-Time (< 20 hrs)	2	2.3	1	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not Employed	1	1.2	2	2.3	1	1.2	0	0	1	1.2

Asheville Cohort

Beginning with the Fall Semester 1993, ACCE began instruction in its distance education doctoral program at the Asheville Graduate Center (AGC). This doctoral program is available to professional educators in Western North Carolina, especially those responsible for providing leadership for community colleges, four-year institutions, the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service and others engaged in providing educational opportunities for adults. The program uses the cohort model where students take all the same courses in a lockstep fashion. The Asheville Cohort students complete their course requirements in a lockstep fashion with all students taking the same courses at the same time. The four-year curriculum requirements for this cohort are more rigid than for students on the main campus since the students do not have the freedom to choose electives that exist on the main campus. Alumni who entered the ACCE department as part of the Asheville Cohort comprised 8.8% of the survey respondents. For the purposes of this report, the Asheville Cohort survey responses were aggregated with those of doctoral degree respondents from the main campus in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Contact with Faculty

Typically, master's degree alumni had contact with their permanent advisor/chair at least one to two times per semester (48.7%) while working on their final degree requirements, and 46.0% had contact once per month or more. Survey results indicate that doctoral degree candidates had more overall contact with their permanent advisor/chair with 76.7% indicating contact once per month or more. Contact with other committee members was often less frequent, with 10.0% of master's alumni and 22.4% of doctoral alumni reporting contact with their committee at least once per month and 36.7% of master's and 40.0% of doctoral alumni reporting contact with their committee one to two times per semester. When considering contact with faculty according to the highest degree earned by alumni who responded to this survey, its reasonable to conclude students who must complete a research-based dissertation (i.e., Doctor of Education degrees) would necessarily spend more time with their chair and members of their

committee. Since graduation, 38.4% of responding doctoral alumni report contacting their chair more than three times and 58.8% have requested a letter of recommendation from an ACCE faculty member, while 15.8% of master's alumni reported contacting their chair three or more times since graduation and 36.8% requesting a letter of recommendation.

Alumni Ratings of ACCE

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with twelve statements designed to assess the experiences of ACCE students. These items were measured on a four-point Likert-type scale (4=Strongly Agree, 3=Agree, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree). Item 12J (The ACCE program helped me to experience personal growth) was rated highest by master's students (mean=3.49), while item 12B (I experienced good working relationships with other students in the ACCE program) was rated highest by the Ed.D survey respondents (mean=3.49). Item12G (I use the research skills that I gained in the ACCE program in my current job) was rated lowest by both groups of survey respondents with means of 2.86 for master's students and 2.99 for doctoral students. Tables 9 and 10 present the twelve items, their means, and standard deviations.

Table 9. *Master's Ratings of ACCE by Survey Respondents*

No.	*Item*	*Mean*	*SD*
12A	ACCE faculty were easily accessible to me during my graduate program	3.24	0.59
12B	I experienced good working relationships with other students in the ACCE program	3.42	0.50
12C	I am satisfied with my overall educational experience in ACCE	3.29	0.84
12D	If I had to do it over again, I would get my degree in ACCE	3.28	0.77
12E	I would recommend the ACCE program at NC State to others	3.32	0.71
12F	The ACCE program prepared me for leadership in my field	3.03	0.69
12G	I use the research skills that I gained in the ACCE program in my current job	2.86	0.79
12H	The ACCE program helped me attain knowledge and skills directly applicable to my career	3.37	0.71
12I	I found the ACCE program to be intellectually stimulating	3.47	0.80
12J	The ACCE program helped me to experience personal growth	3.49	0.73
12K	The degree I received from the ACCE program has been a valuable addition to my professional life	3.34	0.75
12L	Earning my ACCE degree helped me qualify for promotion	3.16	0.82

Table 10. *Doctoral Ratings of ACCE by Survey Respondents*

No.	*Item*	*Mean*	*SD*
12A	ACCE faculty were easily accessible to me during my graduate program	3.23	0.73
12B	I experienced good working relationships with other students in the ACCE program	3.49	0.55
12C	I am satisfied with my overall educational experience in ACCE	3.24	0.70
12D	If I had to do it over again, I would get my degree in ACCE	3.16	0.82
12E	I would recommend the ACCE program at NC State to others	3.24	0.78
12F	The ACCE program prepared me for leadership in my field	3.04	0.69
12G	I use the research skills that I gained in the ACCE program in my current job	2.99	0.78
12H	The ACCE program helped me attain knowledge and skills directly applicable to my career	3.29	0.67
12I	I found the ACCE program to be intellectually stimulating	3.22	0.62
12J	The ACCE program helped me to experience personal growth	3.37	0.55
12K	The degree I received from the ACCE program has been a valuable addition to my professional life	3.41	0.70
12L	Earning my ACCE degree helped me qualify for promotion	3.04	0.85

Comparison of Entering and Current Employment Experiences

Alumni were asked to reflect on various aspects of their employment situation at the point of entering the ACCE program and in their current situation. All alumni who earned master's degrees were employed in some manner upon entering the ACCE program while 94.2% of doctoral-level respondents were employed. 75.7% of master's respondents and 82.6% of doctoral respondents were working full-time. Currently, 94.7% of master's respondents and 94.2% of doctoral respondents are employed with the majority of both groups employed full-time. Around 45% of both master's and doctoral survey respondents are employed with the same organization as when they began in ACCE. Respondents were asked to indicate what type of organization they were employed with when they began their graduate work at NC State and the type of their current organization. Results indicate that, while alumni do often change which organization they work for after completing their degree, they typically do not alter the type of organization for which they work (see Table 11).

Table 11. *Employment by Organizational Type*

Organizational Type	Upon Entering ACCE				Currently			
	MR		DR		MR		DR	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Community College	2	2.7	25	31.7	4	12.5	23	29.1
University	9	5.4	18	22.8	7	21.9	21	26.6
Non-Profit	2	24.3	7	8.9	1	3.13	7	8.9
Extension Service	2	5.4	3	3.8	2	6.3	1	1.3
Business/Industry	13	35.1	6	7.6	11	34.4	6	7.6
Government	3	8.1	7	8.9	2	6.3	8	10.1
Self-Employed	0	0	2	2.5	0	0	4	5.1
Other	5	13.5	10	12.7	5	15.6	9	11.4

In addition, it is evident that attaining an ACCE degree has resulted in changes in position and job responsibilities in the lives of alumni. Nearly 90% of master's respondents and 71.3% of doctoral respondents indicated they currently held a different job title than when they entered ACCE, and over three quarters of both master's and doctoral respondents have different job responsibilities. The survey also inquired about the nature of these responsibilities. Following completion of the ACCE degree, survey respondents who earned the doctoral degree more often cited administration and consultation among their current job responsibilities, while a reduced number indicated they were responsible for instruction and training. Table 12 presents a summary of the reported job responsibilities by respondents both before and after attaining their ACCE degree. As employment is often multifaceted, respondents could mark any options that applied to their position responsibilities so totals may exceed the total number of survey respondents.

Table 12. *Job Responsibilities*

Job Responsibilities	Upon Entering ACCE		Currently	
	MR	DR	MR	DR
Administration	15	43	15	52
Instruction / training	19	49	18	37
Program design	11	36	15	32
Program coordination	10	37	16	24
Consultation	6	19	10	29
Other	11	11	14	21

Earning a wage is an important aspect of working and education is often viewed as a means by which an individual can qualify for a higher wage. Respondents were asked to indicate a range in which their income fell upon entering graduate study in ACCE and what their income range was at the time they completed the survey. When current income is considered in conjunction with degree (see Table 13), the results indicate a positive trend toward an increase in salary from when the respondent entered the ACCE program for each level of degree (i.e., M.S., M.Ed., and Ed.D.). Tables 14 and 15 present

summaries of income by major and again, a trend is evident that, regardless of degree, the respondents current income is generally higher than when they entered ACCE.

Table 13. *Income by Degree*

Income	MR		DR	
	Before	Current	Before	Current
$20,000 or less	4	0	4	2
$20,001 - $30,000	12	3	17	4
$30,001 - $40,000	10	4	23	2
$40,001 - $50,000	7	12	17	16
$50,001 - $65,000	1	8	11	24
$65,001 - $80,000	0	3	6	15
$80,001 and above	1	4	3	17

Table 14. *Master's Degree Respondents' Income by Major*

Income	Adult Education		Higher Education Administration		Training and Development	
	Before	Current	Before	Current	Before	Current
$20,000 or less	1	0	2	0	1	0
$20,001 - $30,000	5	2	4	1	3	0
$30,001 - $40,000	3	2	2	2	5	0
$40,001 - $50,000	3	4	0	4	3	4
$50,001 - $65,000	0	1	0	2	1	4
$65,001 - $80,000	0	0	0	0	0	3
$80,001 and above	0	0	0	0	1	4

Table 15. *Doctoral Degree Respondents' Income by Major*

Income	Adult Education		Higher Education Administration		Training and Development	
	Before	Current	Before	Current	Before	Current
$20,000 or less	1	1	2	1	1	0
$20,001 - $30,000	11	2	4	2	2	0
$30,001 - $40,000	10	1	13	1	0	0
$40,001 - $50,000	5	8	9	8	3	0
$50,001 - $65,000	7	8	3	13	1	3
$65,001 - $80,000	4	10	1	4	1	1
$80,001 and above	0	7	1	5	2	5

WRITTEN COMMENT ANALYSIS

Respondents were given an opportunity to provide written comments addressing the following three prompts: 1) Please describe the benefits you gained by pursuing a graduate degree in ACCE; 2) What were the greatest obstacles in getting your degree? and 3) How can the ACCE program improve the graduate experience for students in the future? In addition, respondents to the written comments portion of the survey were asked to identify the highest degree they received through ACCE as a means of better contextualizing their responses. Thus, this summary of themes in the open-ended responses are organized first by highest degree, and secondly by specific open-ended question. Typed verbatim comments are presented in Appendix B.

Master's Degree Respondents

Benefits Gained by ACCE Degree

The benefits for alumni who earned a master's degree and who completed the survey can best be categorized into three main themes: job-related benefits, personal benefits, and course-related benefits. A common benefit noted by respondents was that their ACCE degree brought with it general personal and professional growth. Job related benefits included the acquisition of knowledge pertinent to their job, the ability to change professions, increased salary, leadership skills, and improved networking. Personal benefits included beneficial relationships both with faculty and with other students, intellectual stimulation, and the M.Ed. credential. Course-related benefits included class size and the accessibility of instructors

Obstacles Faced While Pursuing the ACCE Degree

Numerous obstacles were noted by master's-level survey respondents; however, the nature of these responses were varied and, beyond an emphasis on the struggles to balance work, family, community, and school obligations, defied logical grouping into thematic elements. Some responses cited academic shortcomings such as a lack of research, writing, and computer skills while others noted personal problems, faculty attrition, limited relationships with both faculty and students, and the time and sequence of courses as obstacles to attaining their ACCE degree. Other responses included the lack of evening office hours of faculty, paperwork, a lack of familiarity with campus, tuition increases, admission to the program, and travel. The lack of dominant themes (beyond balancing life commitments) suggests further inquiry, employing a differing methodology (e.g., focus groups), is necessary among this group to identify meaningful areas for change.

Suggested Improvements in the ACCE Program

As the obstacles perceived by survey respondents were diverse, so too were the suggestions for improvement. However, four areas for improvement emerged: faculty, courses, after graduation, programmatic. First, alumni called for faculty to improve their demands in courses, for a more diverse professoriate, evening office hours, and for better relationships with faculty. In courses, respondents suggested improvements should include internships, more Saturday and online courses, new courses (i.e., in research and computers), the freedom to take more courses outside of the department and through distance education, a clear distinction between masters and doctoral coursework, supporting job-related research, more research experiences, and more demanding courses. In addition, alumni called for more courses that link directly to the real world, perhaps by incorporating more speakers who are working in the field. After graduation, respondents felt that additional help in job placement would be beneficial as well as a departmental alumni association and alumni networking. Programmatically, alumni felt that the department should do a better job of marketing the programs while increasing admissions standards and finding ways to involve part-time students in student life.

Doctor of Education

Benefits Gained by ACCE Degree

Respondents who earned the doctoral degree noted many benefits to earning their ACCE degree. Analysis of these responses revealed four main themes: skills and knowledge, personal and professional development, relationships, and programmatic aspects. Within the skills and knowledge theme, alumni most often cited knowledge pertinent to their job as the greatest benefit of attaining their Ed.D. degree from ACCE. Other benefits in this theme included improved writing, research, critical thinking, teamwork, and time management skills. Personal and professional development also was a notable benefit to alumni. Notably, only respondents who attained the doctoral degree noted increased respect from others as being a benefit, while others indicated the degree brought them self fulfillment as well as promotions and/or salary increases. Several respondents cited the credential itself as a benefit. Relationships with both faculty and other students were frequently cited benefits while various programmatic aspects of ACCE were also cited such as assistantships, the time of course offerings, the flexibility of the program, and the cohort model available to the Asheville students.

Obstacles Faced While Pursuing the ACCE Degree

The most dominant obstacle was balancing work, family, community, and school commitments while enrolled in the doctoral program in ACCE. Beyond this overriding theme, there were several aspects of faculty, courses, program, and personal obstacles that respondents noted the faced while pursuing their ACCE degree. Faculty turnover was a key complaint among respondents as was bickering and politics between faculty members, and balancing the demands of disparate committee members. With respect to courses, the most often cited obstacle was the dissertation. Contributing to the difficulty

posed by the dissertation were indications from respondents that the ACCE coursework did not prepare them adequately to undertake independent research and they received limited training in research methodology and statistics. Program obstacles included paperwork hassles, transfer of previous work, and requirements to be at NC State during the summer (Asheville cohort). Personal obstacles also faced survey respondents such as financial difficulty, personal tragedies, self-discipline, and motivational issues.

Improvements in the ACCE Program

The survey respondents who earned the Ed.D. degree were generous with their suggestions for improvement in the ACCE program. The majority of these improvements included programmatic changes, for example, offering a Ph.D., creating courses that better prepare the student for the dissertation process (including statistics and research methods coursework), more distance education, weekend, and daytime course opportunities, more contact with working professionals, and making courses more demanding. These students also indicated the program would benefit from enhancing student-faculty relationships, implementing help with job placement, ensuring that adequate faculty are available to staff and chair committees, and starting a student group for those who are in the dissertation phase of their degree requirements.

CONCLUSION

This alumni survey of the Department of Adult and Community College Education at NC State University was designed to assess the impact of graduate study upon its students. The results have shown the department awards the doctoral degree more than any other and that adult education is the most popular major. Most students complete their coursework in three years or less and finish their final requirements in a year or less. While students who work full-time during their time in graduate school outnumber those who do not, it does take these students longer to complete their degree than those who do not work or who work part-time. While results indicate that nearly half of all respondents have changed where they work since beginning their graduate work, most alumni do not change the type of organization. As would be expected, results indicate that often, the job responsibilities of respondents have changed since they started their ACCE degree in addition to their salary. Alumni indicate they are well pleased with their experiences in graduate school. Finally, written comments demonstrate that the greatest challenge facing students in the program are in balancing their school, work, family, and community commitments and correspondingly, some suggestions call for an increased support network of part-time students and those in the dissertation phase of their degree requirements, more distance education, and weekend courses.

APPENDIX A

Survey Instrument

Dear ACCE Alumni:

I am requesting your special assistance. The Department of Adult and Community College Education is undertaking an Alumni Survey. We are asking you to provide us with your candid assessment of the department, your academic program, and the impact of your academic experiences upon your career. We would also appreciate your suggestions for improving the curriculum and services for students. This effort will identify how the department has made a difference in your professional development and how our department can better serve both students and key stakeholders. We hope to establish benchmark standards for future comparisons. These benchmarking activities will help us identify the direct impact of the department upon our students, as well as delineate key findings to enhance our national reputation.

As you review the survey, we are asking you to note the experiences and impact of the degree in relation to both your past and current professional and educational work efforts. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete, with three open-ended questions for your personal observations and suggestions. **This survey is confidential.** You will notice that the survey instrument has a serial number on it to help estimate the return rate, but no connection between this number and your name will be maintained. Your responses will be kept anonymous and aggregated with those of other alumni for reporting purposes. The request for salary information may be of concern to you; however, please understand that the information on salary ranges for graduates has been of importance for many prospective students, as well as a helpful point of reference regarding the impact of our program on our students' success in the job market. We have included a pre-paid return envelope for your convenience.

As part of this survey, I am also requesting that you consider **volunteering for the ACCE Alumni Mentoring Network**. The goal of this network is to link current and prospective ACCE students with ACCE alumni for the purposes of informal advising and sharing of academic and employment experiences. Initial contact information regarding your current role and background would be provided on our website with contact information for prospective or current students. If you wish to get further information and wish to volunteer, I request that you contact me at 919-513-3706 or at carol_Kasworm@ncsu.edu.

Thank you for your support and assistance.

Carol Kasworm
Professor and Department Head
Adult and Community College Education
North Carolina State University
919-513-3706
carol_Kasworm@ncsu.edu

CODE NUMBER _____

INSTRUCTIONS: Please mark an **X** in the box corresponding to your response to each question. Unless otherwise instructed, only mark one response per question.

Section I: Your Experiences in ACCE

1. When you first entered the ACCE program, were you a:
   - ☐ PBS student
   - ☐ Conditionally-admitted student
   - ☐ Fully-admitted student (Raleigh Campus)
   - ☐ Fully-admitted student (Asheville Cohort)

2. What was your major course of study in ACCE?
   - ☐ Adult education
   - ☐ Higher education administration
   - ☐ Training and development

3. If appropriate, please list your specialization_____

4. What was the highest degree you earned in ACCE at NC State?
   - ☐ M.Ed.
   - ☐ M.S.
   - ☐ Ed.D.

5. Which of the following best describes the ***primary*** reason why you entered the ACCE Program?
   - ☐ To begin my career
   - ☐ To be able to advance in the career field I was in when I entered the program
   - ☐ To make a transition to a different professional area
   - ☐ Other_____

6. From the time you first entered the program, how long did it take you to complete the required coursework for the highest ACCE degree you earned at NC State (excluding exams, capstone paper, thesis or dissertation)?
   - ☐ 3 years or less
   - ☐ 4 years
   - ☐ 5 years
   - ☐ 6 years
   - ☐ 7 years
   - ☐ 8 years or more

7. In what year and semester did you graduate?
   - ☐ 2001
   - ☐ 2000
   - ☐ 1999
   - ☐ 1998
   - ☐ 1997
   - ☐ Fall
   - ☐ Spring
   - ☐ Summer

8. After completing your ACCE coursework for the highest degree you received, how long did it take you to complete your final requirements (e.g., exams, capstone paper, thesis or dissertation) and get your degree?
   - ☐ 1 year or less
   - ☐ 2 years
   - ☐ 3 years
   - ☐ 4 years
   - ☐ 5 years or more

9. While you were working on the final requirements (e.g., exams, capstone paper, thesis or dissertation) for the highest degree you earned in ACCE at NC State, on average, about how often did you have contact with:

   a. Your permanent advisor/chair
   - ☐ Never
   - ☐ Less than once month semester
   - ☐ 1-2 times
   - ☐ once per or more

   b. Any of your advisory committee members
   - ☐ Never
   - ☐ Less than once per month semester
   - ☐ 1-2 times
   - ☐ once per or more

10. Since receiving the highest degree you earned in ACCE at NC State, how often have you contacted your permanent advisor/chair?
    - ☐ Never
    - ☐ Once
    - ☐ 2-3 times
    - ☐ More than 3 times

11. Have you ever asked any ACCE faculty member to write a letter of recommendation for you? ☐ Yes ☐ No

12. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/ Not Applicable
ACCE faculty were easily accessible to me during my graduate program	■	■	■	■	■
I experienced good working relationships with other students in the ACCE program	■	■	■	■	■
I am satisfied with my overall educational experience in ACCE	■	■	■	■	■
If I had to do it over again, I would get my degree in ACCE	■	■	■	■	■
I would recommend the ACCE program at NC State to others	■	■	■	■	■
The ACCE program prepared me for leadership in my field	■	■	■	■	■
I use the research skills that I gained in the ACCE program in my current job	■	■	■	■	■
The ACCE program helped me attain knowledge and skills directly applicable to my career	■	■	■	■	■
I found the ACCE program to be intellectually stimulating	■	■	■	■	■
The ACCE program helped me to experience personal growth	■	■	■	■	■
The degree I received from the ACCE program has been a valuable addition to my professional life	■	■	■	■	■
Earning my ACCE degree helped me qualify for promotion	■	■	■	■	■

PART IIA: EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE WHEN ENTERING THE ACCE PROGRAM

13. Were you employed when you entered the ACCE Program?
    - ■ Yes: Full time (40 hrs or more/week)
    - ■ Yes: Part time (20-39 hrs per week)
    - ■ Yes: Part time (less than 20 hrs/week)
    - ■ No (*skip to item 18)*

14. What was your job title when you entered the ACCE program?_____

15. With what type of organization were you affiliated when you entered the ACCE program?
    - ■ Community college / 2 year
    - ■ University / 4 year
    - ■ Nonprofit
    - ■ Extension service
    - ■ Business/ Industry
    - ■ Government
    - ■ Self-Employed
    - ■ Other (please specify)_____

16. What were your professional responsibilities? (mark all that apply)
- ☐ Administration
- ☐ Instruction / training
- ☐ Program design
- ☐ Program coordinator
- ☐ Consultation
- ☐ Other (please specify)

17. What was your annual before-tax income? Please be assured that all information is completely confidential and is only collected for comparative purposes.
- ☐ $20,000 or less
- ☐ $20,001 - $30,000
- ☐ $30,001 - $40,000
- ☐ $40,001 - $50,000
- ☐ $50,001 - $65,000
- ☐ $65,001 - $80,000
- ☐ $80,001 or more

PART IIA: EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE SINCE GETTING YOUR ACCE DEGREE

18. Are you currently employed?
- ☐ Yes: Full time (40 hrs or more/week)
- ☐ Yes: Part time (20-39 hrs per week)
- ☐ Yes: Part time (less than 20 hrs/week)
- ☐ No (*skip to item 18)*

19. Are you with the same organization as when you entered the ACCE program?
- ☐ Not applicable (not employed when entered program)
- ☐ Different organization
- ☐ Same organization

20. With what type of organization are you currently affiliated?
- ☐ Community college / 2 year
- ☐ University / 4 year
- ☐ Nonprofit
- ☐ Extension service
- ☐ Business / Industry
- ☐ Government
- ☐ Self-Employed
- ☐ Other (please specify)_____

21. Do you have the same job title as when you entered the ACCE program?
- ☐ Not applicable (not employed when entered program)
- ☐ Different job title
- ☐ Same job title

22. What is your current job title?

_____

23. Do you have the same job responsibilities as when you entered the ACCE program?
- ☐ Not applicable (not employed when entered program)
- ☐ Different responsibilities
- ☐ Same responsibilities

24. What are your current professional responsibilities? (mark all that apply)
- ☐ Administration
- ☐ Instruction / training
- ☐ Program design
- ☐ Program coordinator
- ☐ Consultation
- ☐ Other (please specify)_____

25. What is your current annual before-tax income? Please be assured that all information is completely confidential and is only collected for comparative purposes.
- ☐ $20,000 or less
- ☐ $20,001 - $30,000
- ☐ $30,001 - $40,000
- ☐ $40,001 - $50,000
- ☐ $50,001 - $65,000
- ☐ $65,001 - $80,000
- ☐ $80,001 or more

PART III: YOUR CONCLUSIONS

Highest Degree Received Through ACCE: ☐ M.Ed. ☐ M.S. ☐ Ed.D.

26. Please describe the benefits you gained by pursuing a graduate degree in ACCE?

27. What were the greatest obstacles in getting your degree?

28. How can the ACCE program improve the graduate experience for students in the future?

APPENDIX B

WRITTEN COMMENTS

M.S. and M.Ed
ACCE Alumni
Survey Results

Question # 26 Benefits Gained

Personal/Professional Growth

Discovering I could do it.
The credential of a Master's Degree
Improved leadership skills
Improved dialogue skills/maturation of discussion skills
Skills for design/development/evaluate training
Skills and knowledge that I am using in my current position.
More opportunities outside my current organization.
It prepares me for consulting which I plan to do in retirement from my present position
It has enabled me to have a new career in an area I enjoy.
Discovering I could do it.
Many opportunities to apply learning to real life
Significantly increased my earning potential. Immediately able to apply skills learned, especially needs analysis and consulting skills.
Advisors helped me find contract work while in school and solid job leads after graduation.
The degree itself. Theoretical understanding of the topic
Became a more effective facilitator
Networking opportunities. Attending several professional conferences
Transition to community college setting.
Marketability
Personal growth and development
Professional skill development.
Developed higher level thinking.
Job advancement, increased salary, and promotions, more respect in field
Allowed me to utilize my skills in the pharmaceutical industry
Tools and models used in course work impressed management during job interviews
Job flexibility and promotion
Intellectual stimulation
Increases salary
Job change

Faculty

The experience, knowledge, and expertise of the program's faculty both inspired me and enhanced the learning environment. I have great respect for the faculty
The importance of faculty professional contributions to the college academe
Quality of instruction was excellent throughout
Access to XXX and XXX
Instructors were accessible, sensitive to work demands and flexible
Believing in myself via an advisor who believed in me
Great instructors-especially Dr. XXX
Exposure to faculty

Students

Relationships with fellow students
Class size fostered good dialogue and opportunities to get to know others well
Interaction with other students in similar and other professions.
Excellent student relationships

General
Better understanding of administration in a research university
Valuable leadership skill knowledge and information about adult learning
Knowledge gained regarding Higher Ed programming, law, and history
Background in student affairs, finances, and background on how to begin and run programs
Practical, applicable skills in program/instructional design and teaching techniques
Identification of adult learning styles and communication preferences
Training design principles
Materials development
Total training process methods
Sales and Marketing planning and strategic development
Increased awareness of current issues in adult education, especially in the community college setting
Ability to assess and deliver educational needs
New knowledge in adult education, the adult learner, adult processes. Basic courses in T&D.
Overall understanding of T&D concepts
Theoretical understanding of the topic
Understanding of the instructional design process
I got to check the master's requirements on future jobs
The process and considerations/major issues/themes.

M.S. and M.Ed
ACCE Alumni
Survey Results

Question # 27 Greatest Obstacles

Time/Travel

Travel to classes and time to complete course assignments.
Finding the time to complete papers and projects while working full time
Time constraints – school plus full time job responsibilities
Working full time
Time management and managing priorities
Working full time and going to school
Family commitments
Long extended daily/nightly hours in study
Participating during long distance learning classes was a challenge for me
Time of some courses

Cost

More than 50-80% increase in tuition

Faculty/Advisors

Faculty turnover. I never had the same professor twice.
Lack of evening office hours for advisor
Advisor not really available – not much use (Dr. XXX)
Advisors leaving
Poor quality instruction in several cases
Many miscommunications with advisor (Dr. XXX)

Program Quality

Getting into the program
Once I got into the program, I was enthused and enjoyed my courses.
The MAT
Frustration with the quality of courses
My undergraduate education was much more challenging
Feelings of wasting my time
The program was not challenging and not flexible
Lack of real world application.

Personal Issues

Stress on family members due to time spent studying
Balancing personal and work responsibilities
Work, family, and course load
It was difficult being one of the only students in the student affairs program who was not a resident director on campus
Balancing w/family life. Death of parent.
Health

Dissertation/Paperwork

Not knowing how thesis paperwork was done
Lack of knowledge about conducting research especially the statistics component
The paperwork can be confusing
Original committee chair would not allow me to use the topic that I wanted and I lost interest
Writing papers.
Making the leap from course work to dissertation work.
Self discipline regarding completion of the dissertation.
Finding the most appropriate research quickly.
Keeping my research materials organized.

General

Lack of familiarity with campus after 10 years out of school
Lack of communication about basic information such as parking, card for student identification, etc.
Journals and books not carried by the NCSU library.
Learning computer skills necessary to keep up with a higher education
Not enough informal networking with faculty and students. Lack of connection to program
Wide range of skills and experience of students made relevant learning difficult.
Sequence of courses in the plan of study
Location and access to the opportunity NC State was way too slow to respond to the need for this on a similar program in the Western part of the state.

M.S. and M.Ed
ACCE Alumni
Survey Results

Question # 28 Suggested Improvements

Entry Requirements

Better marketing, be more helpful and organized when dealing with prospective students. My experience with the school search and visit was not welcoming. This definitely needs to improve
Don't require a standardized entrance exam
Require GRE to up quality of applicants
Offer Ph.D. program for qualified students
Clearer entry requirements.
Higher level of students.
Clearer distinction between Masters and Doctorate.

Courses/scheduling

Challenge students more.
Specialization area for OD
Opportunity to take more research courses.
I helped out w/NILIE while at ACCE and was amazed at all the Ed.D students I met who didn't have the slightest idea how to analyze their own data for their dissertations. Those of us on NILIE gained far more practical research experience than anyone else in the ACCE program, or so it seemed.
Provide the student with outside opportunities to become more proficient in computer based research and the elements of research statistical application
New courses
Continue with evening and weekend classes
Make sure courses link to real world requirements
More real world curriculum.
Online courses.
Offer more off campus credits
Flexible course schedules.
More flexibility. Provide more outside courses in Business, management, OD, HR, etc.
More presentations in classes from people in the field who are doing the job on a daily basis
Evening work study or observation
Offer some Saturday classes that have built in time to complete assignments
Regular evening classes should build in more time as well.
Outside speakers to talk about different careers and industries…similar to MBA programs.
Continue to offer students opportunities to gain experience during school through projects, internships, etc.

Faculty/Advisors

Provide a more consistent relationship between students and their advisor/chair.
My frustrations with the program stemmed from the low expectations of faculty and the poor quality of student presentations/contributions in class. My undergraduate program at another institution was much more challenging and rewarding intellectually than my graduate work at NCSU.
Continue recruiting faculty committed to teaching working professionals, maintain small to mid size class sites
Increase evening advisor availability
My research was related to my job role and this had direct application to my employment. Graduate advisors should continue to support this type of research.

Professor/instructors would be readily available to answer questions.
Knowledgeable faculty.
Better advisor/advising program.
Good academic and personal counselors
More diverse professors

Mentoring/Job Placement/Career Counseling

Assign a career counselor to each student
Sign up for Alumni mentoring immediately upon program completion
Assistance with placements and job search
Better working relationships between advisor and student (more communication)
Follow-up and continuing relationship after graduation.
More access to internships
Provisions for job placement would be helpful
A full time executive search recruiter would be appropriate in the department
Try to develop more of an alumni assoc. with this group
Strengthen alumni networking opportunities. Have recruiting events and a career counselor at the NCSU Career Placement Center.
Create some type of internship at end of course work.
Collaborations with companies
Establish a way for students to stay in touch with courses, faculty, and students
Mentoring program

Tuition

Minimize tuition increases for those paying on their own

General

Better parking
Computer training or computer tech support.
Book ordering by mail
Being a PT student meant I was on campus only for classes and the library. I didn't feel involved in the life at NC State. Perhaps some way of involving PT students would make them more a part.
Continue to encourage and work with the strengths of a student while developing weaker areas
Show there's no age limit to learning, changing jobs, and/or finding new careers

Ed.D
ACCE Alumni
Survey Results

Question #26 Benefits Gained

Personal/Professional Growth

Intellectual dialog and experience
Better grounding in the discipline of instructional design
My writing skills have improved and I am now more aware of what it takes to publish journal articles. In addition, I feel that some people respect me more now that I have a doctorate.
I acquired skills that, I feel, have made me a more effective instructor.
I currently review textbooks for a publisher in my profession; I feel that my graduate experience has helped me with the skills needed to critique works.
I plan on writing a textbook for my profession. The research process in graduate school will be beneficial for this endeavor.
Opportunity to broaden horizons and get away from narrow job, isolation from other similar people
Political connection to VA and applied Baldridge concepts
Academic preparation and skills training for a career in adult education
Public admin. minor—very beneficial
Ed.D. really helped, ultimately, in promotion and status among peers—I did not realize beforehand!
I received higher pay, better knowledge of the inside operations of a community college, students give you better respect with the advanced degree and they know you worked hard for that degree.
The salary increase associated with the advanced degree is also significant.
It gave me additional formal credibility in my full-time position and in my consulting work (this is separate from my full-time position). I do believe my research skills have been sharpened considerably. It has helped me to remain competitive in my field
I have been able to advance in my career to the level of Dean and I have the career option to become a community college president.
I learned the following: team building skills, leadership traits, motivational techniques, research methods (valid vs. invalid), critical analysis, and group dynamics
Having an Ed.D. almost invariably earns benefits in the workplace.
My degree led directly to a position as Director of CE for a small ? of a state university. From there I became Assistant Dean at a state technical college.
Credibility
Increased knowledge and skills
Critical thinking
Research skills
Disciplined persistence/ closure of tasks/ planning—time mgt.
Research ability, knowledge, higher credentials, and professional
Research skills
How to educate adult learners (this is applicable to all work settings)
Fuller understanding and the ability to research in my area of interest, which is fundraising and philanthropy confidence, contacts.
While in the program, my corporate career "took off" and I was given 3 promotions plus landed a wonderful OE job at a local up and coming company. My salary jumped by over 50K. With Butch's help, I presented the findings from my dissertation at AERC and AHRD. I also landed a seat in ASTD's national research to practice committee. Last fall, I made a move over to academe (a lifelong dream) and took a position as asst. professor of HR at Peace College. None of these would have been possible without my doctoral degree.

Interfacing with intellect in field of Adult Ed., knowledge enrichment, networking of colleagues, professionals, improved skills in profession.
Knowledge relevant to my current and future work in higher education administration and adult education programming
A "union card" and professional respect from the credential
Established college relationships with other adult education or higher education administration professionals that expanded my network
Ability to be an independent consultant, fully equipped with knowledge to specialize in an educational field of my choice such as evaluation.
Respect of having knowledge because of credential. So, I have more opportunity and legitimacy.
A great leap in earning ability and the ability to determine terms
Networking—faculty, other students
Knowledge base in my field
Research skills
I learned the practical business management skills I needed to perform at my current job.
Marketability due to advanced degree of salary
Lifelong personal and professional relationships
The development of a set of research and critical thinking skills which I use daily in my personal and professional life.
I use my research skills I gained from the program. In particular, the experience with NILIE has been invaluable as a researcher and data analyst.
Recognized accomplishment by employer of completing the degree while continuing to work full time
Research skills gained in the program have given me the ability to identify issues and resolve these with analytical skills.
Have participated/ presented in local and national presentations with new skills gained from the program resulting in a more effective delivery
Prepared myself for promotion opportunities
My specific goal in pursuing the Ed.D was professional preparation.
Dramatically improved my writing skills; have been published since completing degree
Gained confidence in research
Gained confidence as a community college leader
Immense personal satisfaction in completing degree
Improved time management skills juggling grad school, full-time employment
Reached a new level of professionalism that prepared me for advancement at my college
Made numerous professional contacts that have enhanced my career
Enjoy the prestige of being an NCSU grad
I met several natural leaders in the community college arena.
The Ed.D. has opened doors to experiences and opportunities I would not have had otherwise. It also has provided the needed edge for moving forward professionally and financially.
I enjoyed the academic work but am disappointed that my degree has not helped me increase my income, as I had hoped it would. It does not seem to be well respected and is viewed as "just education." My MSW is more valuable to me in the job world and the Ed.D. It may actually be a handicap because employers fear they might have to pay me more. As it is, I work for the federal government, where it can be totally ignored.
I entered the program to ground myself in the theoretical and intellectual framework of the field.
I often recommend the program to others. The benefits I gained are many: a nice library of reference books related to ACCE and HE, new friends and colleagues, exposure w/in the academic community
Peer professional networking
Skills in program planning
Skills as adult educator
Gained more knowledge and skills in the areas of adult education/Extension education as well as continuous quality improvement (CQI).
Enhanced self-confidence in working with people from all over

Made many professional friendships with faculty and colleagues for future networking
Honed in on program planning knowledge and skills the world (Canada, Africa, etc.)
New perspectives on organizational behavior
Awareness of how to treat/ not to treat students
Evaluation skills which enabled me to be hired as a consultant which provided travel money and avenues to present nationally and internationally
Pride in NCSU
I gained necessary skills for my career
I gained the self-confidence and theoretical underpinnings necessary to be successful in a senior administrative position in a community or private college.
I now have the paper credentials necessary to be considered a suitable candidate for a senior administrative position
Promotion
Increased wages
Increased recognition
Broader knowledge base
The completion of the degree allowed me to move into an administrative position
I enjoyed the intellectual stimulation and the exchange of viewpoints
Theoretical background of adult education concepts
Good framework for statistical application in performance improvement
degree provides more flexibility in planning for retirement
Teamwork skills
Professional credential
Professional advancement; Broad based experience in my field; close professional and social relationships with others in the same professional realm.
Gain research skills with outstanding faculty
Proud to represent the school and program
Ability to be promoted, viewed as more valuable to organization, see transitional career opportunity as retirement approaches—move to consultation role
Degree completion mostly post work time
Enhanced credibility in my job among my co-workers and college administration
Learning experiences both in and out of the classroom have real applications to my job
Strengthened a somewhat "flagging" discipline to complete goals
Credibility—people more likely to hear or listen to someone with Ed.D. The knowledge and skills that helped me work with people, understand how to relate information
Job promotion to vice president position
Knowledge in my field or career
The degree itself, which has definitely opened doors
N.C. State University and ACCE program has provided me with exceptional research skill in designing program instruction for professional educators in private practice and in the public schools. The Ed.D. degree has opened doors of opportunity to do staff development with public and private schools in central and eastern North Carolina.
Contacts (networking opportunities)/ development of additional professional relationships
Broad exposure at local, state, and national level
Sense of belonging; social interaction with new set of peers; ease of networking
Team building and leadership skills
Ability to network with others in my field
Personal growth
Quality academics, networking with other higher education instructors and administrators, participation in local and national conferences, and an appreciation for the need and value of educational research.
Increased knowledge
Improved skills

Expanded network
Prestige of doctorate with colleagues
Foundations in Adult Ed theory/ practice

Faculty

I benefited by the knowledge shared in the classroom by experienced faculty
Some of the faculty are excellent.
Mentoring faculty (esp. Dr. XXX)
Exposure to some great professors
I thoroughly enjoyed my time in ACCE. The faculty members with whom I associated were thoughtful, responsive, engaging, and challenging. I felt supported in my studies and pushed to do my best (thanks GBV!)
The faculty were extremely helpful and intelligent.
I was blessed to work with some wonderful professors—most notably my chair,Dr. XXX. I also took classes from (and loved)XXX, XXX, XXX.
Excellent mentoring, through staff, particularly Dr. XXX
Established a valuable ongoing relationship w/ my chair
The support and cooperative nature of the cohort experience was a rare and wonderful gift. Dr. XXX was a true leader—he served the cohort as a counselor, director, advocate, and whip!
Worked with a dissertation chair who was an outstanding role model to me. He inspired and helped me regain all of my confidence and appropriate assertiveness.
Supportive, caring professors
Faculty and staff were exemplary in modeling professionalism
Chance to meet Malcolm Knowles
Chance to take classes with Dr. XXX, XXX, and XXX
Work experience within the department

Students

New friendships and acquaintances among fellow students
Fellow students interesting and fun
Professional students brought valuable experience
I benefited by the amount of professional interaction I had with other students
The contacts with faculty and students were important.
Developed some outstanding colleagues in the cohort
cohort model allows personal and professional bonding and support—on campus students commented about the pros of our cohort model
Networking with other students
Interaction with other students—networking—sense of accomplishment
Exposure to students from a variety of other workplace settings

General

I was blessed to have participated in the first Asheville Cohort: the finest group of professionals that I have ever had the pleasure to work with.
Whereas other programs mix higher ed. classes with public school leadership classes, NCSU offers a "pure" program. I didn't waste time taking useless courses. I learned how to help adult learn
Content in adult education directly related to AHEC mission
Overview of higher Ed.
Sense of academic preparedness through advanced studies

The flexibility to design with my advisors a plan of study that met my interests within the department and throughout the greater university.
I gained a good understanding of higher education.
Upon entering the ACCE program—I did so because of the organization with which I worked—The professional benefit is yet to be ascertained.
Easy classes and few requirements made the coursework go quickly.
The benefit of this was that most classes were offered at night which made the situation doable.
Understanding of higher education—history, laws, culture, administration
The "hands-on" practical application was the best for me.
Course content broadened my understanding of higher education.
The course "The Adult Learner" was a revelation.
Opportunities to teach multidisciplinary courses
Opportunity to conduct research in an area of interest.
Heal from the devastation I felt from the experience of lesbian sexual harassment in another Doctoral program at NCSU (different department)
Knowledge of adult learning

Ed.D
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Survey Results

Question #27 Greatest Obstacles

Time/Travel

Travel (1.5 hours each way)
Distance—commuted 2.5 hours one way
Time constraints of working full time and going to school
Multi-task management
Full-time employment
Time to study since I also worked full time.
Time constraints
Balancing work and school
Balancing work, school, family
Traveling 130 miles one way for classes 2-3 days a week while working full time
Distance—85 miles one-way. I never had a chance to do distance education
40 hr. work week—I should have quit my job or taken an extended leave of absence and concentrated exclusively on completion of studies. I didn't realize I could have easily gotten another job after I finished!
Work schedule (arranging work schedule to accommodate class/ study time necessary
Travel to and from campus. Two and one half hours each way for coursework and five hours one way while completing comps, proposal, and dissertation
Balancing work/family/studies
Balancing work and school responsibilities.
Traveling 260 miles (round trip) to classes, working full time
Balancing a very demanding job with a very demanding curriculum.
Balancing a family life with studies.
Travel time (2.5 hours was required for each trip to Raleigh and return home)
Time—demands of full time job with those demands and school little time to reflect and process learning
Working full time, managing a family, and driving to Raleigh one to two times a week for 5 years. (My commute was 100 miles one way), and doing the required coursework. But, given what I know now, I would do it all over again.
Distance and coordination with work obligation
The travel to class in Raleigh (3 hours travel one-way 6 hours of class)

Faculty/Advisors

Lack of interaction/guidance from my committee.
My advisor was David Mustian. He kept me on track and motivated me to continue. He was the biggest reason I completed this degree successfully.
The greatest obstacles were statistics teaching styles and faculty turnover. In some instances syllabi were ambiguous, cumbersome and self-serving. Replacing committee members and/or committee chair may nullify previous work.
Being a member of the Asheville Cohort, it was sometimes difficult to assemble my committee members.
Constant changing of committee members and chairs. I went through three chairs because the first two left the department.
The statistics department was not helpful at all—they did not have the resources and do not understand behavioral sciences! They tried to help but I kept hitting dead ends.
Change in membership of committee

From an academic and legal perspective, I was astounded in a required class for the degree that the professor stated that the rigor of her grading varied with the background of the individual student. It became difficult to maintain the moral fortitude to complete the class knowing from classmates A's were being given out for little work.

Faculty in fighting and power struggles

Faculty who refused to be creative, open-minded, and were highly dogmatic. Thank goodness there were some who were not in the #2 category above. However, almost all of them left NCSU for better working conditions, career choices, etc.

ACCE lost some excellent faculty while I was a student in the department. The people on my committee didn't really care and were overwhelmed.

Butch left NCSU in 1999, and I had to do my dissertation work long distance while he was at Cornell. We have a wonderful relationship, and the phone, fax, and email made this doable. Dr. G-K (who was on my committee) had to be replaced when she left as well.

At times, a lack of proper guidance in meeting time lines, course requirements, and an ego driven member of the committee.

Lack of contact w/ committee members

I was fortunate to have an outstanding committee chair but for many in the Asheville Cohort it has been very difficult to select a chair. Students based outside the Raleigh Campus need more contact with faculty members.

Lack of collegiality among faculty (making putting together a committee difficult)

Lack of support for qualitative research

I was 29 years old when I completed the degree. I began when I was 25. Faculty and colleagues were reluctant to work with me. I had to prove myself in almost every class. Only a select group got to take courses with the most recognized professors. I never had the opportunity to take courses with Dr. Baker or Dr. Vaughan

Advisor who refused to use email

Advisor and committee members who left NCSU without telling their students

"Shopping" for courses as I designed my program—having to visit individual faculty members who maybe had a syllabus on hand

My chair resigned her position, left the college, and I was abandoned. Dr. Deegan and Dr. Baker came to the rescue and we worked together, completing the dissertation in a timely and orderly manner.

Reaching members (other than the chair) of my committee.

Getting members (other than the chair) of my committee to return phone calls

The posturing of committee members with one another resulting in additional work

In-fighting among faculty members that had negative input on students and learning which I attribute to a lack of leadership under old department head

Finding a committee chair, many said no, too overworked

Getting credit for a course based on my professional experience…that seemed to depend on who your chair was

Coordinating dissertation committee from Asheville

Maintaining connection with committee chair in Raleigh

Bickering and power plays between NCSU faculty and administration. The Department Chair at the time was domineering, unprofessional, and rude. He showed no respect for students or faculty and caused many difficulties. He is no longer at NCSU.

Difficulty in building an advisory committee when no real personal relationship with most of the professors

Faculty changed too often—I had to reassemble my committee several times (of course, I took so a long time to finish, too)

Burrow, Glass taught adult education principles using major pedagogical styles. Missed many opportunities to exemplify principles in practice. Neither capitalized on the vast amount of experience we students brought to class and were unable to facilitate class discussions.

Wynetta Lee was pleasant but ineffective and disorganized.

Dr. Burrow and Dr. (can remember his name) would NOT respond to my phone calls, emails, and drafts of my dissertations. They blind sided me at my defense and offered almost no helpful feedback.

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Question #28 Suggested Improvements

Entry Requirements/Program

I enjoyed my experience w/ ACCE, and I've referred others to the program and NCSU.
You (ACCE) and the NCSU grad school do a good job w/ adult and professional students—other campuses could learn from your system.
Departmental orientation for newly admitted students
Continue to provide this great program for candidates in western North Carolina.
Continuous enrollment policy
Standards for student admittance should be raised. Many are not prepared for graduate level work.
Flexibility—partner with other successful programs. I got a lot out of P.A. courses
Don't lose your Extension history!
Keep standards high.
Admit less students: class sizes were way too large for graduate study. Should somehow create opportunities for real dialogue or seminar classes with 10 to 15 students.
As a graduate, I would like my degree to become more valuable. This can only occur by maintaining and/or raising standards.
There "seemed" to be a group of deadwood students on the 10-year plan. It would help the program to advocate 6-7 years or out.
A newsletter linking faculty accomplishments to alumni would establish a nice linkage between the program and alumni.
Departmental requirements for participation in national research conferences (ex. AAHE, ASHE)

Courses/Scheduling

Post all course syllabi to an ACCE Dept. website to enable students to compare courses, make sure of their choices
There was too much grade inflation. The program was not challenging enough.
Remain flexible in class times
Add coursework that introduces qualitative and/or quantitative statistical analyses with hands-on experience
Offering weekend and daytime classes.
Reinstating the foreign language requirements and the statistics requirements.
Making the coursework requirements mirror the end of program requirements will better prepare students for what is to come.
Expand the finance/ budget elements of program. Require the presidency course!! Excellent mechanism to understand the community college presidency.
I would also suggest more courses outside of ACCE that are excellent and contribute to plan of work.
Reduce the number of courses required and get into the dissertation sooner (Ed.D.)
Have more distance ed opportunities for some of the basic courses
Get away from courses (do not require them) that are somewhat irrelevant to the student's field. I needed more Higher Ed. courses, less Adult Ed. I'm not in Extension or CC work—but was required to take it
Continue to be flexible by offering weekend programs, etc.
Offer post graduate opportunities for further education…Notices of new classes
More courses to apply learning like in training and development—but overall great program
Could offer Ph.D. curriculum
I would like to have taken more research classes, and would love to have had an option to get a Ph.D. (instead of an Ed.D.)

Keep having courses in late afternoon and early evening and ability to have 2 "back-to-back"
Add flexibility in program for variety of applicable electives
Continue distance-learning opportunities (i.e. Asheville cohort)
Mandate a SAS/SPSS class for students to take during the last semester of coursework. This will improve the quality of student research that is truly produced by this department. Work on improving student access to courses and professors. What you have is good, but the model can always be improved upon
Select faculty members who have a sincere desire of helping students to achieve their educational goal. Educational politics among faculty can discourage deserving students from seeking a degree in the ACCE program.
Weekend courses
Internet, Web-based, Teleconferencing
Course offering that allow students to attend 2 courses in the evening
Improve the link between coursework and the dissertation process.
Although I enjoyed working with Dr. Dan Rodas, I found the FINANCE course did not meet my expectations. I needed more information and training about managing a budget specifically relating to the community college, not private institutions.
Also, the course titled "Current Issues in Student Affairs" had no intellectual bite to it. It was not academically challenging in any way.
Diversify courses offered to include balance of adult education, administration, training and development
Grant credit to students who have taken a course previously—do not require that they retake (we had 1 or 2 who "took" Boone's course 3 times!)
Establish a continuous (every semester) course in quantitative methodology that includes awareness of available databases. This course should be non-credit, open every semester, and aimed at individual hands-on help for students both in technological growth and statistical understanding.
Distance learning opportunities, particularly on courses that are theory-based (would greatly help with travel, family, and work obstacles)
Continue to recognize that many of the students are employed—the schedule of classes was excellent for me. I was able to get 2 classes per trip except for one semester
It seems that ACCE is practicing what is preached for adult learners, thanks.
More outside speakers who are currently "doing it"
Think outside the box in requirements for summer school. Move into online coursework and diversity of educational methods.
Development is missing as a field of study in the T & D program. Many T & Ders are interested in this aspect, so the program falls short here.
I would encourage that thought be given to the addition of the Ph.D. within the department. Should that ever become a reality, I would return to NCSU and pursue it.
Continue w/ technology proficiency standards

Faculty/Advisors

I think that since ACCE faculty know the importance of evaluation of the program, improvements have been made over the years to keep the program challenging and competitive.
Requirement to contact advisor each semester
Hire more faculty to support students
Some faculty members are excellent (Drs. Baker, Serow, Pettitt) however, there were many inept faculty.
The department can improve the graduate experience by insuring that adequate faculty is available to advice and staff the graduate committees.
Have instructors more involved, cooperative
More interaction & NCSU faculty for the Asheville cohort. The Asheville campus needs more mentors than Dr. Locke.
Dr. Burroughs, Baker, and Grey (Psychology) –the perception in my experience their attitude was "I'm here, I'm making a sacrifice, I expect you to do the same."

I believe with younger and more diverse faculty members, you will be able to present the student with latest information in ACCE

Have the faculty look beyond the walls of academe when dealing with candidates. Few of us can join their ranks—most have to resume former jobs.

Graduate advisors need to be accessible.

Professors could provide more guidance as to their expectations. Many times I said "Just tell me what you want me to do." I got indirect answers most of the time.

In an education department that bills itself as a champion of adult education and life-long learning a more positive exchange between faculty and their adult students would be helpful. During my time there I found Dr. Glass, Dr. Pettitt, and Dr. Gillett-Karam supportive, interested in the learning process, and leadership development of students they taught, and excellent role models. Others were knowledgeable instructors, but less concerned about students than their own power within the academic department.

There were not enough women faculty when I went through, and the professors seemed overly burdened with committee work.

Balance committee loads among faculty so no faculty member is overwhelmed with high numbers of advisees

Enhance the diversity of faculty as well as variety of professional work life prior to joining faculty—need real life experiences in combination with academic, scholarly expertise.

I feel that you did a good job. There were some faculty that were more engrossed in their own research to be interested in mine, but they are no longer with you. When my enthusiasm began to lag, Dr. Glass provided me with the motivation and assistance I needed. He never became discouraged with me. How will you ever replace him?

Experienced advisors with quality time for new students.

Faculty needs to remember, however, that the strength of the program depends a great deal on the faculty-student relationship. Knowing the faculty is interested in their students and that faculty work to make themselves available to students will keep ACCE at NCSU in the top-ranked program of its kind in the nation

Practice what they teach about learning theory

Keep focus on student learning vs. proving something to their colleagues (power plays) "Students" at the levels of Graduate and Doctorate studies need not be victims to the whims of NCSU administrators.

The university, at all levels, in all departments, needs to emphasize TEACHING and STUDENTS--along with research. There should be limitations on the amount of outside consultative work that professors can accept. After all, aren't THEY full-time employees? If so, how do they have time to provide regular consulting services for private enterprise? The fees that they receive from companies while employed by the state are scandalous.

Dissertation

In the doctoral program, when writing my dissertation, there was no link to the university—it would be good to have an active student group or program to maintain that when you are not taking classes

The dissertation prep class is a great idea. I did not take & this was a struggle for me.

The dissertation process is rigorous---and it should be. The coursework experience was not nearly as demanding. I honestly got sick of all the whining (by students) that was condoned/ encouraged by the faculty

Any type of dissertation "social support" could only help.

A course in dissertation writing or "lingo" might help the student get a better flow of writing as they approach that "blessed event."

Provide more encouragement and support during the thesis and dissertation stage of the graduate program.

The dissertation process should be explained thoroughly before the doctoral student begins the research. There should be more instruction than a cursory allusion to the steps involved.

Maybe require a thesis/dissertation prep. type comes early in the program with input from all advisors. (Recently, I have reviewed drafts of research from students who have completed all req. coursework with high overall GPA. A couple of the students have very poor writing and research skills—and limited understanding of the process.) It seems there should be a way to "weed out" students who haven't yet gained

satisfactory writing skills. It helps the program maintain a level of respectability while providing a reality check for all students.

It would have been nice to have had more training for my dissertation as well as to have had an opportunity to do research w/ professors while as a student.

Help them (students) begin to explore dissertation topics earlier in their coursework; incorporate into assignments

Continue w/ dissertation development course (not offered when I was a student)

A thesis/dissertation seminar

Mentoring/Job Placement/Career Counseling

Help graduates find jobs

Your idea of a mentoring network is great. it would have been very beneficial for me to have had someone when I first came to NCSU. I did receive a request from a potential student from Guam about 2 years ago, but I believe she is still undecided. Would also recommend an international focus to attract students worldwide.

Help more w/ placement opportunities

A mentoring relationship will serve to help students

Mentoring is a wonderful idea—especially how to put together dissertation committee!

Devise a plan in which part-time students can form supportive groups. Encourage these connections.

Help with job placement after graduation

Provide guidance to students interested in publishing their papers/ research products

Provide opportunities for career counseling (I realize that this takes place informally and maybe formally)

Perhaps, someone could be designated or volunteer to provide career counseling.

General

For Asheville Cohort:

Permit "local" professor (UNCA-A, WCU) to teach appropriate courses in Asheville in summer (e.g. statistics)

Thank you for offering the program in Asheville. I hope you will continue to offer ACCE in other regions of the state.

Continued recognition of the significance of advanced studies for practitioners in the areas of adult education.

Work with students to facilitate learning and what students are doing

More contact with professionals working in the field of education outside of NCSU

Invite educational practitioners to talk more about their experiences. More vigorous research projects, and topics on assessment would be very helpful. Perhaps, encouraging students to attend conferences would be very helpful.

Request student time

State should encourage students to attend research conferences while as a student as Butch did for me. It would be great to see State become an Adult Ed/ HRD "power house" like UGA or Minnesota.

Malcolm Knowles was my "hero." I had expected to experience the kind of learning about which he wrote. That would be a great improvement.

I believe the program could be improved with a more intensive research focus. Also, extra-curricular professional development opportunities would be helpful. I would like to have published BEFORE completing the degree. I feel I should have more research experience. An internship program would be nice too.

The listserv

You are doing what I feel is the right thing and that is to survey the alumni to determine the problems that they face in completing the requirements for the program. Talk to and survey people who have also been dismissed from the program.

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